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ENG 3009G-009: Myth and Culture

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English 3009G: Myth and Culture
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Office Hours: Tu, Th / 11-12, 2-4 and by appointment

Fall 2001
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Required Texts:

Distributed through EIU Textbook Rental System:

Sophocles, Sophocles: The Theban Plays (trans. Fagles)
 Homer, The Iliad (trans. Fagles)
 Roy G. Willis, World Mythology
 Rosenberg, World Mythology, 3rd ed.

Additional materials in coursepack available for purchase at EIU Campus Center Copy Services in Martin Luther King Student Union

COURSE GOALS

Our goal this semester will be to explore many myths from several historically and geographically removed cultures, and to learn how to take up these myths as a certain mode of human intellectual history. As we do so, we will be especially concerned with the ways in which these societies have organized their understandings of the world around various and often idiosyncratic understandings of sexual difference. While reading some of the foundational narratives of Ancient Greece, Britain, Babylonia, the Mandinkan Empire, and the Navaho Nation (among many others), we will read with an eye toward understanding how various people from various cultures have described, accounted for, invented, fretted over, and re-constructed sexual differentiation as one of the most fundamental components of the human condition. We will continually ask how these understandings intersect with our own views of gender and sexuality, and by the end of our time together, we may indeed come to wonder whether it is possible to draw a line demarcating where the "biology" of sex ends and where the "mythology" of sex begins.

COURSE POLICIES

Requirements:

Weekly writings--ten of them, which means you can miss five weeks (not including Thanksgiving Break). But you *must* write one a week for the first three weeks of the course. After that, you may space them out as you wish, though I would not recommend putting them off until the end of the semester. (Note: you may also want to relieve yourself of the weekly writing during the weeks when the final drafts of your papers are due. Plan accordingly.) These will be relatively informal pieces, typed or word-processed and 1-2 pages long, ideally focused on a question, problem, or idea the readings assigned for that day raised for you. It may be profitable to think of these as "position papers," in which you take a stand on an issue or begin to think in terms of a longer essay; in any case, these short assignments should not appear as rambling notes. The writings are intended to promote your engagement with the texts and to generate ideas for discussion. I'll read these quickly, will put + marks in the margins by ideas I like, and will put a check mark on the paper if it is satisfactory. If I find it remarkably insightful, or especially smart or daring, I'll mark it with a √+. If you don't seem to have thought profitably about the text, or if you don't seem to have read the text closely, I'll mark it with a √-.

Two papers, each about 5-7 pages long, on topics of your choosing. (titled, typed or word-processed, double-spaced, pages numbered after the first, one-inch margins on all sides, on 8 1/2"x11" white paper, no title page necessary. **Note:** If such things interest you, I will be more than usually open to alternative projects (websites? hypertext essays?) if they relate to the themes of the course. If you have an idea, speak with me about it well before the due date.

Participation in discussion and attendance: The course will be conducted primarily as a discussion course (with occasional, short lectures from me). As you surely know by now, such a course is only truly successful if a high percentage of students participate; it can be unappealing if the "discussion" turns into a dialogue between the professor and a handful of students. To make the discussion run well: 1) you should plan on participating—at least making a comment or asking a question—every day; 2) you should be careful not to dominate discussion (i.e., those of you who are not shy should give other students an opening to participate); 3) you should participate with tact and civility (take other people's remarks and questions seriously, don't interrupt, respond courteously, etc.). The grade for participation will depend upon meeting all these criteria.

If administered, occasional quizzes will be brief, and designed to encourage everyone to keep up with the reading. Results will factor heavily into participation grades.

Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. You are allowed two unexcused absences, but after these, each unexcused absence incurs a penalty of one-half letter grade deducted from your final grade. In the case of an excused absence (as defined by EIU university-wide policy), your excuse must be made in writing, accompanied by the appropriate documentation, and given to me no later than the first class meeting following the absence. In no case may a student accumulate more than five absences, either excused or unexcused, and still pass the course.

Grading: Your work will be weighted as follows:

Weekly Writings	20%
Paper 1	30%
Paper 2	30%
Participation	20%
	100%

Academic honesty: Students are of course responsible for knowing Eastern Illinois University regulations regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism, even if unknowing or accidental, can result in your failing the course and in further action by the university. Please note the English Department's statement on plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism – "The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) – has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, feel free to ask me. Also, please make a point of noting the following: I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty in this course. If I come to suspect misconduct of any kind, I will become dogged about rooting it out, and if my suspicions are confirmed, I will dispense appropriate penalties. That said, let's not allow this to become an issue for any members of our class.

Lastly: Some of the assigned texts for this course may be offensive to some people. Please note that the assignment of any text, film, or image does not necessarily indicate an endorsement of the values or ideas therein.

Course Schedule:

(may be altered as semester continues)

Introduction
Men, Women, and Men-Women

Week I

8/21: Introductions
Course Outline

8/23: from Plato's Symposium (coursepack)

Week II

8/28: from The Book of Genesis (coursepack)
from "Emergence and Migration Tales" (Tewa of New Mexico) (coursepack)

8/30: "Osiris, Isis, and Horus" (Rosenberg, pp. 15-21); "Telepinu" (Rosenberg, pp. 22-25)

Ancient Greece
The Homeric Epic and the Oedipal Cycle

Week III

9/4: Sophocles, Oedipus the King

9/6: Sophocles, Antigone

Week IV

9/11: Homer, The Iliad books 1-3, 6

9/13: Homer, books 9, 16, 18, 22, 24

England
The Quest for the Grail and the Anglo-Saxon Epic

Week V

9/18: King Arthur (Rosenberg pp. 418-53)

9/20: Pulp Fiction (in-class film screening),

Week VI

9/25: finish Pulp Fiction

9/27: Beowulf (Rosenberg pp. 386-416)

Babylonia

Week VII

10/2: Gilgamesh tablets 1-6 (coursepack)

10/4: Gilgamesh tablets 7-12 (coursepack)

West Africa

The Mandinkan Oral Epic, the Yoruba, and the Segu Empire

Week VIII

10/9: Sunjata (coursepack)

10/11: **Paper 1 due, beginning of class**; "The Creation of the Universe and Ife" (Rosenberg, pp. 510-14);
Bakaridjan Kone (Rosenberg, pp. 530-65)

North America

Native American Tribal Mythology

Week IX

10/16: "The Emergence" from Diné bahaanè: The Navaho Creation Story (coursepack)

10/18: "The Legend of the Flute" (Brule Sioux); "Teaching the Mudheads How to Copulate" (Zuni); "The Fight for a Wife" (Aleut); "Teeth in the Wrong Places" (Ponca-Otoe); "The Stolen Wife" (Tewa); "Tolowim Woman and Butterfly Man" (Maidu); "Apache Chief Punishes His Wife" (Tewa); "The Husband's Promise" (Tewa) (all readings in coursepack)

Week X

10/23: "The Creation" (Maya) (Rosenberg, pp. 596-99); "The Creation Cycle" (Rosenberg, pp. 602-08);
"Quetzalcoatl" (Rosenberg, pp. 610-13)

10/25: "Lodge-Boy and Thrown-Away" (Rosenberg, pp. 622-24); "The Woman Who Fell From the Sky" (Rosenberg, pp. 627-33); "Rave and the Sources of Light" (Rosenberg, pp. 635-36); "Sedna" (Rosenberg, pp. 638-41)

The Far East

Japan, China, The Pacific Islands

Week XI

10/30: No class meeting

11/1: "The Creation of the Universe and Human Beings" (Roseberg, pp. 325-29); "Chi Li Slays the Serpent" (Rosenberg, pp. 331-33)

Week XII

11/6: Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (in-class film screening)

11/8: Finish Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

Week XIII

11/13: "Amaterasu" (Rosenberg, pp. 336-38); Kotan Utunnai (Rosenberg, pp. 341-48)

11/15: The Creation Cycle (Rosenberg, pp. 352-58); "The Taming of the Sun" (Rosenberg, pp. 361-65)

Week XIV

Classes cancelled for Thanksgiving Recess

India and the Subcontinent**Week XV**

11/27: "The Creation, Death, and Rebirth of the Universe" (Rosenberg, pp. 292-94); "The Ramayana" (Rosenberg, pp. 299-321)

11/29: Text(s) to be announced; schedule conferences for Monday, 12/3

Week XVI

12/4: No class meeting – instead, conferences with me in Coleman 3811 on Monday, 12/3

12/6: **Paper 2 due, beginning of class; final meeting, wrap-up.**